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The Elementary Social Studies Curriculum

In this chapter, we examine the many factors that are transforming the social studies curriculum, including the impact of No Child Left Behind, state standards, renewed interest in civic education, textbook changes wanted by different interest groups, technology, and more diverse students. The following topics are considered here:

- What Are Your Images of the Social Studies?
- What Is Social Studies and What Are the Goals of Social Studies?
- What Should Be Taught? State Standards and No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- Should Values Be Taught?
- What Are the National Curriculum Patterns?
- Why Are Textbooks and Technology Important?



Why is social studies more than maps and globes?

What Are Your Images of the Social Studies?

Welcome to the world of social studies! What do you remember about your elementary social studies program? If any of the following activities seem familiar, jot down on a piece of paper whether the memory is pleasant.

- Clipping out items from a newspaper for Friday current events
- Doing a research report on Daniel Boone from your school's encyclopedia
- Finding out the latitude and longitude of a long list of cities
- Learning about the Pilgrims at Thanksgiving
- Going on a field trip to a site where your state's American Indians lived
- Answering the questions at the end of a textbook chapter
- Writing to foreign consuls and embassies for information about your assigned country
- Reenacting pioneer life
- Singing patriotic songs
- Preparing and serving different ethnic foods
- Writing a personal history book
- Drawing neighborhood maps
- Working on a committee for a group project
- Learning about the immigrant groups from which you came
- Viewing films
- Writing a book report on a famous American

Small Group Work 1.1



What Works Best?

I have used this exercise with classes many times. Often I have heard I loved doing . . . , but sometimes it was *I hated*. . . . This exercise points out that your days as an elementary student years ago are influencing your image of the social studies. Your images act as a filter as you make judgments about what a good social studies program is and what methods should be used to achieve social studies goals.

Now add to this list the activities that you remember experiencing in elementary social studies. Try to include both pleasant and boring times. Compare with others in the group your list of what you liked and didn't like. Are there activities that everyone remembers enjoying? Are there other activities that everyone disliked? Your image of elementary social studies stems mainly from your own experiences. Can you now draw a simple picture or graphic that summarizes either positively or negatively your experiences as a social studies student? What one descriptive word best pulls together your image of the social studies? Do you think teachers teach much in the way they were taught? ●

Role-playing a character
Finding new information

In North Carolina during the 2005–2006 school year, over 300 elementary teachers rated social studies as their third priority after reading/language arts and mathematics. The authors were worried that with the new implementation of a science test, social studies would be relegated to fourth place.¹

Elementary teachers often have negative attitudes toward the social studies as a result of their own school experiences, perhaps because of the following:

Learning about social studies largely emphasized trivial facts.

The dominant instructional tool was the textbook.

Most social studies activities concentrated on large group recitation and lecture.

Emotional or affective objectives were not included as part of the curriculum.

In addition, although students on a national survey looked forward to social studies and were not afraid to ask questions in social studies, they did not think social studies was as useful as math, English, and science. Many students do not see the link between their social studies program and social participation in the classroom, school, community, nation, and the world.

Two other reasons may account, at least in part, for the less than enthusiastic attitude that many elementary teachers have toward the social studies: lack of preparation and lack of interest. Many of you have taken only a few social science or history courses in college. You may feel underqualified or reluctant to tackle the sometimes controversial subject matter of the social studies. Many of you may feel strongly that reading and math programs are basic in elementary education; however, a social studies program is also basic. In fact, a good social studies program can go far toward improving students' skills in other subjects, including reading, writing, and math.

The basic purpose of social studies is **civic education** or **citizenship education**. The terms *citizenship education* and *civic education* are used interchangeably but *civic education* is now becoming the more popular term. A good social studies program can contribute to producing good citizens. I believe in the *vital* importance of social studies instruction, both to prepare students to become responsible, thoughtful, participating citizens and to provide

Small Group Work 1.2



How Important Is Social Studies to You?

How do you rank the importance of social studies in the elementary curriculum? Look at the following list of traditional subjects taught in elementary school.

Health/physical education (PE)
Mathematics
Reading/language arts
Science
Social studies

Now rank these subjects, 1 through 5, in order of their importance to you. Share your list with other members of your group. Most elementary teachers and students rank social studies third or lower. If your ranking was within this range, what influenced your response? ●

¹Tracy Rock, Tina Heafner, Katherine O'Connor, Jeff Passe, Sandra Oldendorf, and Amy Good. "One State Closer to a National Crisis: A Report on Elementary Social Studies Education in North Carolina Schools." *Theory & Research in Social Education* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 463.

students with the basic skills that they need to function in our society. If I am successful in transmitting these beliefs to you, then social studies teaching at least in your classrooms may not suffer the neglect that otherwise often occurs at the primary level.

This text will help you find ways of teaching powerful social studies that you and your students will find enjoyable, rewarding, and meaningful. Social studies *can* be taught creatively and thoughtfully. As a result of your efforts, students may find that social studies is their favorite subject. More important, through *your* social studies instruction, your students will acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to participate as active citizens in our society and the global community. It is also important that you as a teacher exhibit a personal interest in the social studies, show enthusiasm for the content, and model intellectual curiosity.

What Is Social Studies and What Are the Goals of Social Studies?

What Is Social Studies?

From your images of social studies, you can see that teachers have different understandings of what social studies is and how social studies should be presented to students. In particular, the aftermath of September 11, 2001 (9/11), with the war against terrorism and the conflict in Iraq has evoked concerns about the teaching of patriotism and how teachers should teach controversial events such as globalism (more in Chapter 8).

The differences among teachers also include disagreement on what should be the appropriate **content** or defining attributes of social studies. Look at your state's framework or curriculum documents. Is the title *Social Studies*? Or is it *History/Social Sciences*? *Social Studies* implies an integrated approach whereas *History/Social Sciences* connotes a separate subject approach.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), established in 1921, is the national professional organization of teachers concerned about social studies. The national organization publishes *Social Education* and, for the elementary grades, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*. In addition, NCSS also has many state and regional councils. Most state councils also publish journals and newsletters for their members, in addition to holding annual conferences. NCSS is the major advocate for the teaching of social studies and along with the state councils tries to influence legislation concerning social studies, such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Your membership in NCSS and your state or regional council could help your professional development; they would welcome your membership. In 1992 the NCSS adopted its integrated definition of the field.

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and

Table 1.1 NCSS Curriculum Themes/Standards

1. Culture (anthropology)
2. Time, continuity, and change (history)
3. People, places, and environments (geography)
4. Individual development and identity (psychology)
5. Individuals, groups, and institutions (sociology)
6. Power, authority, and governance (political science)
7. Production, distribution, and consumption (economics)
8. Science, technology, and society
9. Global connections
10. Civic ideals and practice

Source: *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, Task Force of the National Council for the Social Studies, Bulletin 89, Washington, DC, 1994.

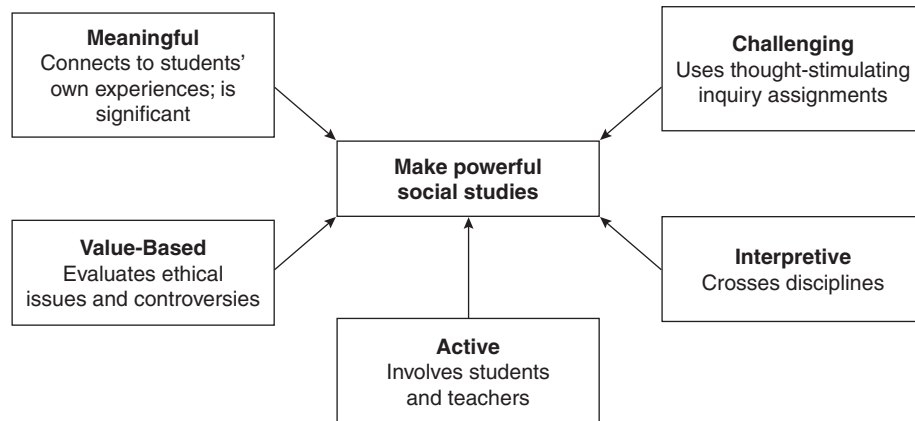
reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.²

In addition, when NCSS published its national standards in 1994, it reaffirmed its commitment to an integrated approach drawing its content from seven disciplines: history, geography, political science, economics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Table 1.1). The first seven standards were based on the major concepts of the social sciences and history. The last three standards were broadly based themes that included several subject areas. An integrated approach assumes that many issues such as health care and crime are multidisciplinary in nature. In other words, you need knowledge from several disciplines, not just one social science or history, to think intelligently about the subject.

These themes/standards will be elaborated more in Chapters 5 through 8. In addition, going to NCSS's own website (www.ncss.org) gives more detail on each of the standards. Bulletin 89 with 178 pages containing the full NCSS standards illustrates the spirit and essence of NCSS's commitment to an integrated approach and the need for powerful social studies (Figure 1.1).

Note that these NCSS Standards were published in 1994 and are many years old. Therefore, NCSS is in the process of revising these standards, but they certainly will keep true to their integrated approach. In particular, there has been criticism that the NCSS themes/standards are too broad to be helpful for individual day-to-day planning. Also, many want explicit connections to content standards developed by other academic disciplines through national organizations such as the National Council on Economic Education and the National Center for History in the Schools, to be linked to the NCSS Standards.

²Task Force of the National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, Bulletin 89 (Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1994): 3.

Figure 1.1 NCSS's Powerful Social Studies Paradigm

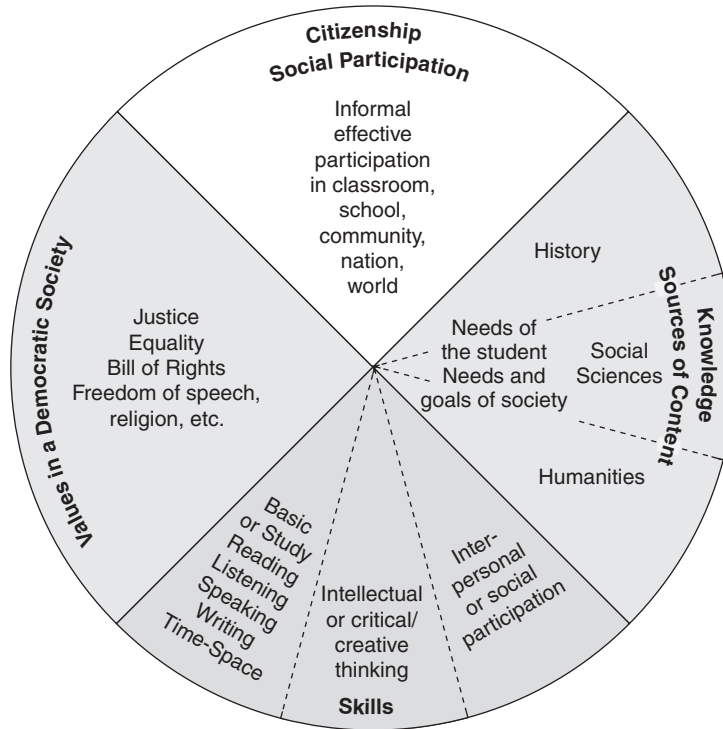
What Are the Goals of Social Studies?

The main purpose or rationale for teaching the social studies is civic education or citizenship education. There are four major goals for civic education. Goals are very broad and general. Therefore, almost everyone agrees with these expansive aims and there is no controversy about goals.

1. To acquire **knowledge** from the social sciences, history, and humanities
2. To develop **skills** to think and to process information
3. To develop appropriate democratic **values** and **beliefs**
4. To have opportunities for **citizenship/social participation**

These four goals are not separate and discrete. Usually they are intertwined and overlapping (see Figure 1.2). You may find in some state standards or frameworks that two goals are combined. Social participation may be regarded as a democratic value or the goal may be stated as “skill attainment and social participation.” The knowledge goal can be referred to as “knowledge and cultural understanding” or “democratic understanding and civic values.” Values may sometimes be called **civic** values to differentiate them from **personal** values. But regardless of how the goals are combined or written, together they form the basic goals of a social studies program. Although these goals may take several years of student learning, the schools can and should focus their social studies program on these four main social studies goals, realizing that goals are not achieved in one day, one week, or even one year. Goals such as good health and good citizenship are pursued by individuals for decades and in a certain sense are never completely achieved.

As these goals indicate, social studies is about people and, thus, builds on an inherently high interest. Each of us is concerned about self, family, and friends, and social

Figure 1.2 Goals of the Social Studies

studies is designed to help us understand ourselves and our nearby neighbors as well as those who live halfway around the world. Creative social studies instruction offers the possibility of humane individuals who incorporate basic American values such as equality, freedom, and respect for property and who are able to put these values into action through effective participation in the classroom, school, community, nation, and the world. Again, this emphasizes the main purpose of the social studies curriculum: citizenship education.

Frequently, the process of learning has emotional values attached to it. Did you *hate* math in school? Did you *love* music? For example, when students study pollution, they usually acquire opinions or attitudes about it. Emotional concerns such as racism in the community can have a striking impact on both subject area and students' skill development. Certain skills such as writing or thinking may be taught in school, but there is no guarantee that students will make use of them. Unless students have a commitment to, a need for, or a willingness to use the skills they have learned, those skills will be of little value either to the students or to society. All this underlines the connections among the four main goals of a social studies education; although we may speak of each one separately, we must not forget their inherent interrelationships.

More Emphasis on History

Especially after 9/11 (2001), critics of the integrated NCSS social studies approach became more vocal about what they considered wrong with the social studies. In their view, instruction should be divided into academic disciplines like history or geography. They view the social studies approach as academically flabby, “dumbing down” the content. In addition, for these critics, social studies teachers do not emphasize American values enough. These

On Your Own 1.1

Social Studies or History, Civics, Geography, and Economics

What is your response to Chester Finn’s remarks on social studies? Do you think his viewpoint is reflected by many of the parents in the schools in which you are teaching or will teach? ●



detractors of the social studies approach generally want more emphasis on history, particularly history with a chronological approach. These viewpoints are reflected by Chester Finn³ of the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (a conservative foundation) who in 2003 described social studies as “long on multiculturalism, feelings, relativism, and tolerance but short on history, civics, and patriotism.”⁴

At a general level everyone espouses civic education, but individuals and groups vary on their definition of civic education and what a

good citizen does. Chester Finn’s views are most closely associated with the citizenship transmission model. Robert Barr, a social studies educator, and his colleagues defined the first three main social studies traditions, shown in Table 1.2. Note that all the approaches emphasize the broad goal of citizenship education but differ on how to achieve this goal.

³James Leming, Lucien Ellington, and Kathleen Porter, eds., *Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong?* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2003).

⁴Chester E. Finn, Jr., “Why This Report?” in *Terrorists, Despots, and Democracy: What Our Children Need to Know* (Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2003).

Table 1.2 Different Approaches to Civic Education

Approach	Goals of Civic Education
1. Citizenship transmission	Students are taught traditional knowledge and values as a framework for making decisions.
2. Social science/history	Students master social science/history concepts, generalizations, and methods.
3. Reflective inquiry	Students use knowledge and thinking to make decisions and to solve problems.
4. Social action/justice	Students develop understanding and skills needed to critique and transform society; often a focus on injustice/inequality.
5. Child-centered	Students develop a positive self-concept and a strong sense of personal efficacy.

Source: Robert D. Barr, James L. Barth, and S. Samuel Shermis, *Defining the Social Studies*, Bulletin 51 (Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1977). Reprinted with permission of the National Council for the Social Studies.

In a more recent analysis of civic education approaches, Westheimer and Kahne⁵ outlined three main conceptions of the “good” citizen.

1. personally responsible citizen—more the character education approach
2. participatory citizen—active member of the community
3. justice-oriented citizen—critically assesses structures

Note that each of these conceptions differs on what skills and values students *need* to become good citizens.

Your Choice

You can see now that definitions of social studies content will vary depending on the value system or philosophical orientation of the teacher or curriculum planner. The citizenship-transmission approach tends to emphasize U.S. history and our nation’s high ideals and achievements. The social science/history approach uses content from the various social science disciplines and history with a view to understanding the major concepts and the respective methods of gathering data. The reflective-inquiry and informed social action/ justice approaches use almost any content as long as it encourages thinking on the part of students. The child-centered/ character education approaches focus on personal development.

On Your Own 1.2

Compare the Approaches

Which approach or model (see Table 1.2 and consider the other civic education approaches mentioned) do you feel most comfortable with? List the strengths and weaknesses of each approach on a piece of paper. Which approaches are seen most frequently in elementary classrooms? ●



What Should Be Taught? State Standards and No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Prodded by the 1983 federal report, *A Nation at Risk*,⁶ which questioned American students’ ability to compete in a global economy, and conferences by the nation’s governors in 1995, the fifty states in our nation embarked on a standards-based education reform effort. Reform implies something is wrong and changes are needed. **Standards** are what teachers are supposed to teach and students are expected to know (content) and be able to do (performance). Standards are useful for the following reasons:

1. To guide curriculum planning to improve student learning
2. To encourage best practices

⁵Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, “Educating the ‘Good’ Citizen: The Politics of School-Based Civic Education Programs.” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, 2002.

⁶*A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*. Prepared by the National Commission in Education (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, April 1983).

3. To guide professional development for teachers where it is needed
4. To prioritize resources such as money for texts, media, and the like.

National Standards

In response to the need for national standards, professional organizations related to the field of social studies then published their national standards. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) had ten broad curriculum themes/standards with five process (skill) standards (see Table 1.1). Four other groups wrote separate discipline standards for history, geography, civics and government, and economics. (These will be discussed more in Chapters 5 through 8.) Much later in 1999 the American Psychological Association published its standards for the teaching of high school psychology, which has had little impact except on high school psychology classes.

At the heart of the reform-based standards effort was the question: *What is the most essential knowledge of the discipline or the social studies?* Answering this question has led to a greater emphasis on students' understanding the major concepts or the big ideas of the subject area and learning the ways of thinking of the discipline, the particular methods used for investigation of knowledge.

The 1994–1995 political outcry over the proposed national history standards ended any possibility of national consensus on history standards (Chapter 5). In addition, conservatives feared increased federal control over the state and local boards of education. Liberals, in turn, worried that the standards movement would stifle educators, be culturally biased, and lead to further standardization. These concerns shifted the development of standards to the states. The states took corrective action to reform schools.

Raising standards presently has widespread approval and strikes a responsive chord with the public and political candidates. Who can argue for low standards? Parents want their children to be adequately prepared for the world of work in the twenty-first century, which means having knowledge and basic skills such as reading and math as well as being technologically literate. Parents are also exposed to the media focusing on urban and rural low-performing schools with little coverage on successful students and schools. These increased perceptions about the “failed public school system” have led to a debate about charter schools, vouchers, and the rapid rise of home schooling. Parents want the power to make choices about the type of school their children attend. Given these anxieties and fears, the standards movement to reform the schools by requiring students to demonstrate by tests certain knowledge and skills makes sense to parents and the public.

State Standards

Now almost every state has adopted standards for the social studies. States have faced two problems in developing standards for the social studies. First, should there be one set of interdisciplinary social studies standards, such as Wisconsin's standards, or should standards be developed in each of the related areas, such as history, geography, economics, and civics? Many states choose to list four separate standards for history, geography, economics, and civics. Second, how should the standards deal with the many value issues and political interpretations so common in the social studies? Here to avoid the firestorm of the detailed

national history standards, most states have moved into broad statements. But they have also included more civic standards compared to the national standards.

The state standards for social studies often built on a compilation of national standards developed by NCSS and the four subject areas—history, geography, civics, and economics. The other behavioral sciences such as sociology and psychology were deemphasized. The work on the state’s standards often was then repeated by groups at the school district level that prepared their own local versions of the standards because of the desire to keep local control, meet the needs of the community, and to give teachers a stake in the ownership of the standards. To avoid political controversy, the standards were often loosely defined.

To understand this better, let us first discuss the many meanings of the term **curriculum**. In the most general sense curriculum consists of both the **plans** for learning and the actual **delivery** of those plans. Standards are really **curriculum or learning standards** or guides for use in curriculum planning. Your state with its standards or local district may have a **required or recommended curriculum**, which can be mandatory for all teachers. This required curriculum is typically written and spelled out and is often called the **official curriculum** or framework. It has been formally adopted by the state or local board. But what teachers actually do in their classrooms is the **taught curriculum**. The **tested/assessed curriculum** is the curriculum that is revealed in tests and other assessments given to students. Sometimes these are called **performance standards**, which measure mastery or levels of attainment in a given content topic or skill.⁷

Changing States’ Roles and NCLB

By 2001, President George W. Bush and Congress were not satisfied with the progress that states had made. For them, state standards had failed to produce significant gains in the academic achievement for four subgroups of students: low-income students, minority students, English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities. These students had the right to learn but were challenging to educate, and it appeared the goals of equity were not being met.

By a vote of 87–10 in the Senate and 381–41 in the House, a bipartisan Congress then passed the biggest education reform act in a quarter century. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was a commitment to standards-based reform. Through NCLB, all schools were to be held to high, measurable standards set by the individual states to raise student achievement for all groups. The NCLB Act mandated broad accountability, requiring all states to test children in grades three through eight in reading, math, and science. Furthermore, schools failing to achieve specific performance targets faced serious sanctions, including providing vouchers to parents for out-of-school programs and eventually replacing the school staff or converting failing schools to charter schools.

This ambitious act required states to establish *their own* annual tests aligned with *their own state standards*. Standards were to be clear, with measurable goals focused on basic skills and essential knowledge. This has resulted in great diversity among state standards and what a given state considers to be proficient students.

⁷Allan A. Glatthorn, *Curriculum Renewal* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1987).

By 2004 a revolt against NCLB was building in state legislatures. Although most parents expressed support for the concept of school reforms, many were reluctant to punish schools for failure, especially if only one subgroup in the school did not make progress. Parents also believe that it is unrealistic to expect students with disabilities and English language learners to successfully pass tests. Legislatures were upset over the stringency of testing requirements, the large number of schools put on probation, and the cost of implementation. Tension existed between the educational policies of the federal government and the control of education at the state and local level. The states were not entirely free to control their own educational policies because opting out of the NCLB framework caused them to lose funds from the federal government. This unfunded mandate caused an outcry. There was pressure on the federal government's Department of Education to modify some of the rules. In response, some of the regulations of NCLB were relaxed. It is expected that there will be future changes in the law or changes in the interpretation of the mandates by the Department of Education. Many believe that NCLB could be simplified and improved while still holding public education accountable for student learning. However, many state and federal policies also need to change. In particular, state standards should be reduced in number. Too-long lists of standards for many subjects are daunting for even the most dedicated teachers. Hopefully as states prepare for the next cycle of review for standards, they will identify fewer goals for each grade level.

Narrowing the Curriculum?

Many believe with testing of students emphasized in reading/language arts and math, social studies and other subjects like music and art have received less attention than in the past. Science also has often been neglected but this may change with the required testing in science. From newspaper accounts, the narrowing of the curriculum is probably most prevalent in schools with a rating of "In Need of Improvement" or at the primary-grade level.

What evidence is there for social studies being neglected? The Center on Education Policy in a national survey in 2004 showed that 27 percent of districts reported social studies "reduced somewhat or to a great extent" whereas 69 percent of the districts reported social studies as minimally or not at all reduced.⁸ You can at once see the difficulties in estimating the time spent on social studies or any other subject due to variation in how much time teachers spend on different subjects from day to day and week to week. In addition, a further difficulty in interpretation is that social studies is often integrated with reading or other subject areas, and the time devoted to social studies may therefore be underestimated.

Time Spent

Large surveys of what teachers report are valuable, but even here teachers' reports on how much time they spend on different subjects may be overestimates. I looked at the data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, a national sample of 20,000 kindergartners and first graders. There were about 8,000 teachers in this study who were asked to give their estimates on time allocations for social studies topics. The most popular topic taught in the first grade

⁸Center on Education Policy, *NCLB: Narrowing the Curriculum?* (Washington, DC, Center on Education Policy, 2005).

was Key Events in American History. Given the popularity of the holiday curriculum in the social studies, probably this topic included attention to Thanksgiving (Pilgrims and Indians), Presidents in February, Columbus Day, and the like. For first-grade social studies, 42 percent reported 1 to 30 minutes a day and 32 percent 31 to 60 minutes a day. Given the wide range of 1 to 30 minutes, it is difficult to ascertain if most first-grade teachers taught social studies an average of 5 minutes a day or 20 minutes a day.⁹

A national survey of about 1,000 teachers in the second, fifth, and eighth grades indicated that fifth-grade teachers spent much more time devoted to social studies than second-grade teachers. Only 8 percent of the fifth-grade teachers spent less than two hours a week devoted to social studies. Time for fifth-grade social studies was indicated by the following results: two to three hours (23 percent), three to four hours (26 percent), four to five hours (22 percent), and five hours or more (22 percent). In contrast, 34 percent of second-grade teachers spent under two hours a week teaching social studies. The most popular second-grade category was 29 percent of the social studies in the two to three hour range, followed by 16 percent at three to four hours and then decreasing amounts of time. Asked about the influence of state testing, 24 percent of the second-grade teachers and 28 percent of the fifth-grade teachers reported spending less time teaching social studies. On the other hand, 62 percent of second-grade teachers and 60 percent of fifth-grade teachers¹⁰ reported about the same amount of time for social studies.

What do surveys of states indicate about the status of elementary social studies? Let us look at surveys of teachers in Indiana and North Carolina that do not have statewide social studies assessments. In a total sample of 594 Indiana teachers, K–3 teachers, on the average, were spending about 12 minutes per day or about one hour per week on social studies. Intermediate Indiana teachers doubled the amount of time spent with at least 120 minutes (two hours) per week or more than 24 minutes per day on social studies instruction. In North Carolina, most teachers reported that students received social studies instruction two or three days a week (39.7 percent). Surprisingly, daily instructional time was the highest in kindergarten and the fifth grade. However, on the whole, K–2 North Carolina teachers spent less time teaching social studies than grades 3 to 6 teachers. In terms of teaching the North Carolina state standards, 36 percent of the K–2 teachers devoted time to the standards compared to 55 percent of the grades 3 to 6 teachers. Both the Indiana and North Carolina researchers expressed great alarm about the crisis in the teaching of social studies.¹¹ On the whole, it appears that there are justifiable concerns about social studies being crowded out of the curriculum, especially at the primary-grade levels.

A Need for Even Higher Standards?

While the debate continues on what should or should not be done about NCLB and whether or not social studies is being neglected, a high profile group of education, business, and

⁹June R. Chapin, “The Achievement Gap in Social Studies and Science Knowledge Starts Early: Evidence from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study,” *The Social Studies* 97, no. 6 (November/December 2006): 231–238.

¹⁰James S. Leming, Lucien Ellington, and Mark Schug, *Social Studies in Our Nation's Elementary and Middle Schools: A National Random Survey of Social Studies Teachers' Professional Opinions, Values, and Classroom Practices* (Storrs, CT: The Center for Survey Research and Analysis, 2006).

¹¹Phillip J. Van Fossen, “‘Reading and Math Take So Much of the Time . . .’: An Overview of Social Studies Instruction in Elementary Classrooms in Indiana,” *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 33, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 376–403. Tracy Rock et al., “One State Closer to a National Crisis: A Report on Elementary Social Studies Education in North Carolina Schools,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 455–483.

political leaders announced that aiming for NCLB competency in reading and math is just a meager beginning. Globalization requires much greater changes for all schools. In their report, the National Center on Education and the Economy, a nonprofit group partly financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation plus other foundations, urged an even more drastic redesign of the American K–12 public schools to make the nation more competitive globally.¹² For the 21st century, students need to be competent in traditional academic disciplines but also know more about the world, become smarter about new sources of information, and develop good people skills, as well as being able to think outside the box. Here is a partial list of their recommendations: universal preschool, extra resources for at-risk students, state control of school finances to equalize funding, exams in the tenth grade, increasing salaries with merit pay to attract talented young teachers. Many agreed with the shortcomings of the present system but felt that some of the recommendations were too radical. Thus, it appears that there will be a continuing debate even beyond the accommodations to weaken NCLB on what the schools should be like in the 21st century. What should be the highest priorities of the schools? Stress equity by removing achievement gaps by focusing on the lowest-performing schools as in NCLB? Or prepare for our nation's future competitiveness and well-being with more attention on higher-ability students?

The goals of NCLB are beyond reproach, and it has brought a modicum of academic progress, especially for students who otherwise might receive little attention. NCLB has shown a wider audience which students are not making progress. In terms of this book, however, the most serious negative impact of NCLB has been that in many classrooms the social studies program has been neglected. Unfortunately, too many teachers are not connecting reading and writing skills to the social studies program and are not using trade books on social studies topics, areas which would help learning both in language arts/reading as well as the social studies program (more in Chapter 10).

Examples of Social Studies Standards

There are strengths and weaknesses to having social studies content standards. First, the standards movement has placed greater emphasis on the major concepts or key ideas along with the methodology of the discipline. This could help to focus the elementary curriculum. Some states have reported increased scores on achievement tests. Second, by focusing on every student and not just the brighter students, the standards movement could improve education, especially if there were a financial commitment to create the proper educational conditions for achievement. Too often in the past, in a given state or even in the same district, two different classrooms on the same grade level had wildly different social studies content or too little content, violating students' equal access to the curriculum. There has been little consistency in how much time students spend on a given subject or the knowledge or skills emphasized within that subject area. The real challenge of reform is reaching all students.

In addition, standards can help teachers and their students to be clear about their purposes by developing coherent goals for learning. Students can find standards to be helpful when teachers spell out criteria for high-quality work, explain how the work will be assessed, and give examples of what the work looks like. Students then have a better idea of what to do and how to do it. When goals and expectations are very clear, more students can meet them.

¹²National Center on Education and the Economy, *Tough Choices or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006).

Teachers also have found that some standards encourage them to expand the traditional elementary social studies content, especially geography and economic content, as well as giving a benchmark for teaching successfully. Standards need not limit the creativity of teachers. Teachers still can use a wide range of approaches to have their students meet the standards. Furthermore, looking carefully at students' work in comparison to standards can help teachers, students, and students' families understand what students know and what can be done to support further learning. Standards have also encouraged closer cooperation among teachers, especially those on the same grade level, to share and to critique the work of students and promising lesson plans. Although few teachers "have learned to love the test," teachers now pay more attention to the alignment of curriculum and instruction to the standards and assessment.

However, critics of the standards movement cite negative consequences of the standards movement: teaching to the test, more student dropouts, rigid curriculum, cheating, more grade retention that does not help students' motivation, and more pressure on students who need the most help. Teachers note the following specific criticisms about state standards:

1. Standards are not age appropriate.
2. There is too much content specified for the grade level.
3. In contrast to being too specific in content, standards may be too general.
4. There is less attention to multicultural/global education.

Let us check some of these criticisms by examining Virginia's history standards for grade 3 as shown in Table 1.3. For the third grade in Virginia there were also geography, economics, and civics standards.

Table 1.3**Virginia's History–Social Science Standards, Grade 3**

The standards for third-grade students include an introduction to the heritage and contributions of the people of ancient Greece and Rome and the West African empire of Mali. Students should continue developing map skills and demonstrate an understanding of basic economic concepts. Students will explain the importance of the basic principles of democracy and identify the contributions of selected individuals. Students will recognize that Americans are a people who have diverse ethnic origins, customs, and traditions, who all contribute to American life, and who are united as Americans by common principles.

History

- 3.1** The student will explain how the contributions of ancient Greece and Rome have influenced the present world in terms of architecture, government (direct and representative democracy), and sports.
- 3.2** The student will study the early West African empire of Mali by describing its oral tradition (storytelling), government (kings), and economic development (trade).
- 3.3** The student will study the exploration of the Americas by
 - a) describing the accomplishments of Christopher Columbus, Juan Ponce de Leon, Jacques Cartier, and Christopher Newport;
 - b) identifying reasons for exploring, the information gained, and the results from the travels.

Source: Virginia Board of Education, *History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools* (Richmond, 2001). These standards are presently being revised but minimum changes are expected.

On Your Own 1.3

What Is Your Reaction to State Social Studies Standards?

Looking at the brief descriptions of Virginia and California's standards, do you think the standards are age appropriate? Too much content? Will the standards promote creative thinking? Or will they be a list of facts for students to memorize? Or will it depend on the teacher? Realize that you are seeing only a small part of the description of the standards and there is wide variation among the states in terms of their level of detail and degree of prescriptiveness. Check the social studies standards and state assessment (if any) of your state. These are usually available on the Internet. Search by using your state's name followed by Department of Education (e.g., Alabama Department of Education) or Department of Public Instruction (e.g., Delaware Department of Public Instruction). In a few cases the title may be different (e.g., Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning). ●



Another pattern is illustrated by California in its content specifications for statewide assessment by standard (Table 1.4).

Should Values Be Taught?

Role Model

You are an important role model. Your actions in and even out of the classroom are carefully observed by your students. Students make judgments on whether you really like them and whether you are fair. In effect, your behavior shows a “proper” way of how to act. Thus, a teacher has been described as a moral compass pointing out to students the accurate direction and the way to act. All values education approaches acknowledge the importance of the teacher as a role model.

Everything you do reflects your values.

This leads to the importance of teaching

values, the strongly held standards or criteria we use in making judgments about people, places, and things. Sometimes the phrases *beliefs and values*, *attitudes*, or *dispositions* are used. Surveys show overwhelmingly that the public and parents want the schools to teach basic values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility. But how, as teachers, do you do this?

Values

Schools have always taught values and moral development through textbooks, teachers, and school rules. Values are presented by the way teachers treat students and the way students are allowed to treat teachers and each other. There is a **hidden curriculum** of what is right and wrong, even when questions of right and wrong do not come up directly in the classroom. Every classroom has rules that embody values. “Children should put or store their possessions in certain places in the room.” “Raise your hand if you wish to speak.” These rules are more than just classroom management techniques. They communicate to children what is required to be good students. These rules teach important lessons about authority, responsibility, caring, respect, punctuality, working in teams, and so on.

Teaching values directly often becomes restricted to teaching broad civic values such as justice and public responsibilities—voting, obeying the law, paying taxes, and serving on a jury. These public values have a high level of acceptance at an abstract level by almost all members of the community, although concrete issues such as capital punishment and police rights engender wide controversy. The primary organization in the field of social studies, the National Council for the Social Studies, lists thirty-one democratic beliefs and values grouped in the following four categories:

Table 1.4**California—Grade Two: People Who Make a Difference**

- 2.1** Students differentiate between things that happened long ago and things that happened yesterday. (A History Standard)
1. Trace the history of a family through the use of primary and secondary sources, including artifacts, photographs, interviews, and documents.
 2. Compare and contrast their daily lives with those of their parents, grandparents, and/or guardians.
 3. Place important events in their lives in the order in which they occurred (e.g., on a time line or storyboard).
- 2.2** Students demonstrate map skills by describing the absolute and relative locations of people, places, and environments. (A Geography Standard)
1. Locate on a simple letter–number grid system the specific locations and geographic features in their neighborhood or community (e.g., map of the classroom, the school).
 2. Label from memory a simple map of the North American continent, including the countries, oceans, Great Lakes, major rivers, and mountain ranges. Identify the essential map elements: title, legend, directional indicator, scale, and date.
 3. Locate on a map where their ancestors live(d), telling when the family moved to the local community and how and why they made the trip.
 4. Compare and contrast basic land use in urban, suburban, and rural environments in California.
- 2.3** Students explain governmental institutions and practices in the United States and other countries. (A Civics Standard)
1. Explain how the United States and other countries make laws, carry out laws, determine whether laws have been violated, and punish wrongdoers.
 2. Describe the ways in which groups and nations interact with one another to try to resolve problems in such areas as trade, cultural contacts, treaties, diplomacy, and military force.
- 2.4** Students understand basic economic concepts and their individual roles in the economy and demonstrate basic economic reasoning skills. (An Economic Standard)
1. Describe food production and consumption long ago and today, including the roles of farmers, processors, distributors, weather, and land and water resources.
 2. Understand the role and interdependence of buyers (consumers) and sellers (producers) of goods and services.
 3. Understand how limits on resources affect production and consumption (what to produce and what to consume).
- 2.5** Students understand the importance of individual action and character and explain how heroes from long ago and the recent past have made a difference in others' lives (e.g., from biographies of Abraham Lincoln, Louis Pasteur, Sitting Bull, George Washington Carver, Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Golda Meir, Jackie Robinson, Sally Ride) (An Ethical, Value Standard)

Source: History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve. Updated Edition, California State Department of Education, Sacramento, CA. 2001, pp. 46–47.

Table 1.5 Approaches to Major Values Education

Approach	Purpose	Method
Caring (Noddings)	Care for self Care for others	Modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation
Moral development (Kohlberg)	Students develop higher set of values	Moral dilemmas, small group discussion, teacher in devil's advocate role
Values clarification (Simon et al.)	Students become aware of their own values Students identify values of others	Variety of methods, self-analysis exercises
Social action	Students have opportunities for social action based on their values	Projects in schools and in community
Indoctrination	Values of students change in desired direction	Variety of methods, selective data provided
Analysis	Students use logical thinking to decide values issues	Rational discussion, research

Note: Difficulties arise when trying to place certain programs such as substance abuse approaches like the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program, which stress self-esteem and drug-free behavior. Some would classify these programs as indoctrination while others would put them in the analysis approach since they may use medical research as a data source. There is a similar problem with many of the character education approaches.

1. Rights of the Individual (life, liberty, justice, security, privacy, etc.)
2. Freedoms of the Individual (worship, thought, assembly, etc.)
3. Responsibilities of the Individual (honesty, respect rights of others, etc.)
4. Beliefs Concerning Societal Conditions and Governmental Responsibilities (elections, civil liberties, minorities protected, common good, etc.)¹³

Few educators or parents would dispute the inclusion of teaching these general public values in the classroom, but more controversial are social/moral issues and personal values. The differing viewpoints of community members as well as different teachers make teaching controversial issues a contentious subject (see more in Chapter 8). Ultimately, it boils down to whose values will be taught.

There are many approaches to values education in the school (Table 1.5). Let us look at these various values education approaches. Even though moral development has generally received little attention by educators, Nel Noddings and many others have advocated that more attention be given in the schools to developing caring individuals who have a knowledge

¹³John Jarolimek, Chair NCSS Task Force on Scope and Sequence, "Social Studies for Citizens of a Strong and Free Nation," in *Social Curriculum Planning Resources* (Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1990), 31–32.

of self and a moral recognition that they can do both evil and good. According to Noddings, restructured schools need to teach students not to harm each other.¹⁴

Lawrence Kohlberg sought to help students develop more complex reasoning patterns based on a higher set of values. Kohlberg called for students to discuss the *reasons* for their value choices, not merely to share with others, but to foster change in the students' stages of moral reasoning. His main method was to present artificial moral dilemmas (whether you should steal a drug to help some family member, whether you should tell on a friend who has stolen a sweater in a department store, etc.). Students then would take positions (such as whether you should tell on a friend) followed by group discussion and relatively structured argumentation in a Socratic dialogue format.¹⁵ Carol Gilligan criticized Kohlberg for omitting a feminine perspective. She believed that females had a different but equally valid way of arriving at moral decisions.¹⁶ Along with a consideration of gender differences, others maintain that more attention also should be paid to the importance of race and sociocultural factors in moral development. Critics of this approach have argued that the moral dilemmas were unrealistic and not the problems that most students presently face in everyday life.

However, the most severe criticism about values education in the schools was directed against Sidney Simon and his colleagues, who advocated a nonjudgmental approach called *values clarification*.¹⁷ These authors wanted to help students become aware of and to identify their own values and those of others. They wanted students to communicate honestly with others about their own values even if their beliefs might be supportive of using drugs or other socially unaccepted values. Simon's methods included using both rational thinking and emotional awareness to allow students to examine their personal feelings, values, and behavior. Often these exercises were contrived situations (deciding who should be chosen to stay in a fallout shelter, writing your own obituary) and self-analysis exercises (writing about two ideal days, jotting down twenty things you love to do). Although critics raged against the values clarification approach for not teaching "good" values and allowing any value system to be acceptable, teachers purchased handbooks of values clarification exercises by the hundreds of thousands and most students enjoyed working with the "fun" exercises.

Critics of the values clarification approach were also concerned about invasion of privacy issues as students talked about their own personal behavior. Some parents also felt that the schools were teaching the wrong values or not correcting students who had "bad" values; many were horrified at Simon's conception of values as relative rather than absolute.

In addition, the few teachers who implemented *social action*—changing or reforming the community—were also criticized when students were encouraged to take social action based on their values. Usually no one complained if the students cleaned up the local park, and student campaigns to protect the faraway whales usually did not engender much controversy. Citizens were upset, however, when the students began a public information campaign about a local factory that was polluting the environment or when students tried to protect local endangered species such as the spotted owl in an area economically dependent on logging. Value analysis and indoctrination approaches are discussed in Chapter 8.

¹⁴Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992).

¹⁵Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Education in the Schools: A Developmental View," *School Review* 74, no. 1 (Spring 1966): 1–30.

¹⁶Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁷Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, and Howard Kirschenbaum, *Values Clarification* (New York: Hart, 1972).

All these approaches to values education—caring, Kohlberg’s moral development, Simon’s values clarification approach, and social action—raise the question of whether the values education classes in the schools really work (see again Table 1.5). The evidence is inconclusive partly because of the problems of doing research in the field. If you teach students to think and reason about important values, do they *behave* according to their reasoned values? Does formal teaching about values always translate into action? Measuring the effectiveness of any values education approach in the schools has always been difficult. What do you count? A reduction in the number of student referrals or suspensions? The number of children who report more smiling faces?

Classroom Episode

Cheating by Using the Internet: A Value Question

Ms. Kim Camera, a teacher with a fourth–fifth grade combination class, has successfully taught the unit on “Early Explorers and Pioneers” for many years. But she has noticed that on student projects and reports that there is a growing number of students whose written language is way above their typical level. Ms. Camera thinks they are using whole paragraphs and even articles without getting permission from the source or citing the source. She suspects that the copying is from the Internet and CD-rom adult encyclopedias, but she has no definite proof. Ms. Camera wants students to cite the sources of their information at all times and thinks copying without permission is a bad habit for students to get into.

Being careful not to accuse any student, Ms. Camera talks privately to each student she suspects of “cheating.” Students grudgingly report the following: “Mom helped me.” “I don’t remember how I got the information.” “I forgot to put down where I found the stuff.” “The Internet is free and you just take it.”

At parent conferences Ms. Camera then speaks to these students’ parents about this alleged copying. Ms. Camera is amazed at most of the parents’ responses. Most defend their actions with the following sentences. “You should be glad that I am helping Benjamin; I work long hours and I am giving him my time.” “Get with it;

there is a real world out there and that’s the way the Internet works.” “Other teachers do not object and are glad to see better reports.” “Our Gina needs special accommodations to do the work you require.” “Boys do not write as well as girls and they need the help from the Internet.”

Ms. Camera realizes that there is a difference between her values and that of parents and their children. She is unsure what to do next. She is also aware that the principal wants to improve school–family relationships.

What steps do you think Ms. Camera should take? Speak to the principal? Bring the issue up at teacher meetings? Talk more to the students about not copying and needing to cite sources of information? What would you do? Does your opinion change if the teacher has tenure?

Ms. Camera knows that there is a standard called “Digital Citizenship.” Maybe she should use one of the many websites to teach students about ethical behavior on the Internet (NetSmartz, i-Safe, NetAlert). Or would it even help if she posted a list of computer rights and responsibilities?



TECHNOLOGY



Your Decision on Values

Your values influence how you teach. Your definition of the social studies, civic education, treatment of controversial issues, and culture education springs from your position on values and the way they should be explored in the classroom. Are democratic values and how these values relate to living in a democracy central to teaching social studies? You will make the decision about whether you want to formally teach values, moral education, or character education.

On Your Own 1.4

What Are the Sources of Your Values?

What do you think have been the main sources of your values? How do you think your values may affect your teaching? ●



What Are the National Curriculum Patterns?

The United States has thousands of local school districts. Although each one is autonomous and can organize a curriculum to suit its own needs and meet state requirements, a national social studies curriculum exists. There are two reasons for this. First is the dominant role that textbooks have had in social studies instruction. In fifth- and eighth-grade classrooms across the nation, you will find in some form U.S. history being taught from books published by only a handful of large companies. About five probably control nearly 90 percent of the textbook market, which ensures a certain similarity in course offerings throughout the nation. Second, most teachers follow guidelines produced by their state, and the states have been influenced by the recommendations of the National Council for the Social Studies. In the past some state standards and frameworks were very broad, requiring only that history, geography, and the social sciences be taught in some manner from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The recent trend with standards-based reform is to provide standards with considerable detail for each or some grades.

State standards and frameworks in turn influence textbook publishers, who want as broad a market as possible. State frameworks of the largest states, particularly California and Texas, help to determine what focus textbooks have. For these interrelated reasons, we see a certain amount of uniformity in elementary social studies programs throughout the nation.

In 1980 Project SPAN (Social Studies: Priorities, Practices, and Needs, funded by the National Science Foundation) found a pattern to the social studies curriculum in most U.S. schools (Table 1.6). Is this the pattern that you followed when you were in school? The basic structure of social studies content at both elementary and secondary levels has changed little during the past fifty years, but a careful reading of the list in Table 1.6 reveals some problems in the traditional social studies curriculum.

Notice first that U.S. history is taught at three grade levels. Too often all three courses are surveys, covering repeatedly everything from Columbus to the latest space shot. There is little differentiation of content and a minimal attempt to build from one course to the next.

Table 1.6 Topics in Social Studies by Grade Level

- Kindergarten/First Grade
 - Self
 - Family
 - School
- Second Grade
 - Neighborhoods
- Third Grade
 - Communities
- Fourth Grade
 - State history, geographic regions
- Fifth Grade
 - U.S. history, culture, and geography
- Sixth Grade
 - World cultures, history, and geography
- Seventh Grade
 - World cultures, history, and geography
- Eighth Grade
 - U.S. History
- Ninth Grade
 - Civics
- Tenth Grade
 - World history
- Eleventh Grade
 - U.S. history
- Twelfth Grade
 - U.S. government/problems of democracy

How did this come about? It happened partially for historical reasons. In the early years of this country, children attended school for only a few years. Because it was important to teach children U.S. history before they ended their school careers, it was taught in the fifth grade. Then, as more children remained in upper elementary school, the course was taught again in the eighth grade, just before students left school to go to work. Finally, as more students continued on through high school, educators again wanted to make sure that they remembered their U.S. history. So history was repeated in the eleventh grade.

Concerns about patriotism continue to favor the inclusion of U.S. history in elementary and secondary schools. It would be unpopular for a local district or a state framework committee to suggest dropping a U.S. history course—how unpatriotic or un-American! Thus, the impact of tradition and patriotic concerns has led to the entrenchment of three separate U.S. history courses.

Notice also the problem area in the sixth and seventh grades. Both grades cover the same broad topics, but there is little agreement about what the content should be at these levels. In some schools, ancient civilization is taught in the sixth grade; in others, this topic is found at the seventh-grade level. Thus, world history/world cultures courses also have a similar problem of duplication as U.S. history courses. Usually the high school course covers everything again, from early human history to the latest world crisis.

Some social studies educators believe that the primary-grade topics are not sufficiently differentiated. The content is thin and redundant—repeating families and communities several times. Too often the textbook content is already known by students or likely to be learned through everyday experiences. Topics are stressed in the first, second, and third grades without new material being introduced or higher levels of thinking being required.

In particular, Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy, in their many publications, call for retaining most of the topics of the traditional elementary social studies curriculum but putting the emphasis on the fundamentals of the human condition.¹⁸ For the primary grades (K–3) the following units contain the powerful ideas for the curriculum: food, clothing, and shelter (Book 1); communication, transportation, and family living (Book 2); and childhood, money, and government (Book 3). This organization of these units not only connects better with students' prior knowledge and experiences but allows these topics to be examined in depth. Thus, the unit on shelter goes beyond just showing photos and video clips on the various types of shelter found throughout the world. Students can examine whether their families own or rent their homes along with the advantages and disadvantages of each. If their parents/guardians owe their own home, are children aware that most likely there is a mortgage? Or students can examine how homes and apartments that are being built in their neighborhood take into account the location and climate of the area. As you can see these activities that draw on all of the academic disciplines, such as economics and geography, and avoid the often superficial coverage of the family and the community.

But perhaps the heaviest criticism of primary social studies content focuses on the "holiday curriculum." In many schools, holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, Presidents' Day, Valentine's Day, Easter, and Mother's Day dictate what is covered in the primary social studies program. These holidays do offer the opportunity to explain much about our cultural heritage, but reliance on them suggests that many teachers feel more comfortable teaching these topics than ones that require more thoughtful preparation.

The holiday curriculum, however, need not be narrow. Holidays can be used as springboards for teaching about cultural diversity by showing how they are celebrated (or not celebrated) in this country and throughout the world. In many cases, though, holiday activities are simply repeated grade after grade, with little attention paid to learning beyond entertainment. Valuable social studies time is wasted. Furthermore, teachers are not always sensitive to the feelings of children from different backgrounds who may be offended or excluded by

¹⁸Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy, *Social Studies Excursions, K–3. Book One: Powerful Units on Food, Clothing, and Shelter*. (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001). Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy, *Social Studies Excursions, K–3. Book Two: Powerful Units on Communication, Transportation, and Family Living* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002). Janet Alleman and Jere Brophy, *Social Studies Excursions, K–3. Book Three: Power Units on Childhood, Money, and Government* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

On Your Own 1.5**Your State Curriculum**

How does your state or local curriculum compare with the traditional social studies curriculum patterns? Is there more emphasis on diversity? On global education? ●



the holiday focus. In the same manner, children may not understand why particular religious holidays are not mentioned or are celebrated in ways unrelated to their religious meanings. The separation of church and state in the United States means that children may *learn* about different religions but religious beliefs may not be practiced in the classroom (more in Chapters 5 and 9).

As you can see, there *is* a national social studies curriculum pattern. But your state's pattern may vary from this model in several ways. Each state generally requires that its own state history be taught at the fourth-grade level. Check on what your state recommends for the sixth- and seventh-grade levels as well. Information about social studies content guidelines can be obtained from your state department of education and the Internet. Your state may also have *legal requirements*—observance of holidays, positive and accurate portrayal of the roles of women and minority groups, or the protection and conservation of the environment—that dictate to some extent what will be taught in the social studies.

Scope and Sequence

Almost all elementary social studies textbooks use what is often called the **expanding communities pattern** or the **expanding horizons** or **widening world scope and sequence model**. All three terms are used interchangeably. **Scope** refers to the list of topics covered in a program. **Sequence** is the order in which these topics are covered. Usually, the two words are used together to indicate what is being taught, whether in the social studies or in any other area of the curriculum.

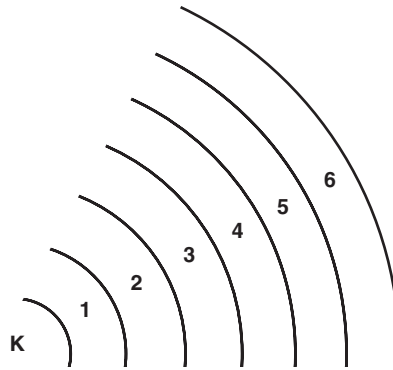
Scope and sequence issues are important. You need to know when students are ready for certain difficult concepts, such as time or chronology. Most primary students have great difficulty trying to imagine what life was like 2,000 years ago. They may think that we have always had television, airplanes, and cars. The eras designated by B.C. and A.D. pose conceptual difficulty for most primary students. Determining at what grade level you might successfully try to teach time concepts is a scope and sequence issue.

The traditional scope and sequence pattern for the elementary grades—the expanding communities—is based on a consideration of the developmental needs of the child. Children usually learn better about real things and life around them than about abstract topics that they cannot see or feel. Therefore, the expanding communities concept begins where children are when they enter school. The focus in the primary grades is first the self, then families, communities, cities, the region, and finally the nation and the world (Figure 1.3).

This pattern of expanding communities made a lot of sense years ago. But now, with computers, mass media, and especially television, children are exposed to events and issues taking place far from their homes. Children also travel more. Primary-grade children are aware of international relationships and domestic crises, wars, terrorism, and pollution

Figure 1.3 The Expanding Horizons Curriculum**Key:**

- K Self and Others**
- 1 Families**
- 2 Communities**
- 3 Cities**
- 4 Regions**
- 5 United States and Canada**
- 6 World**



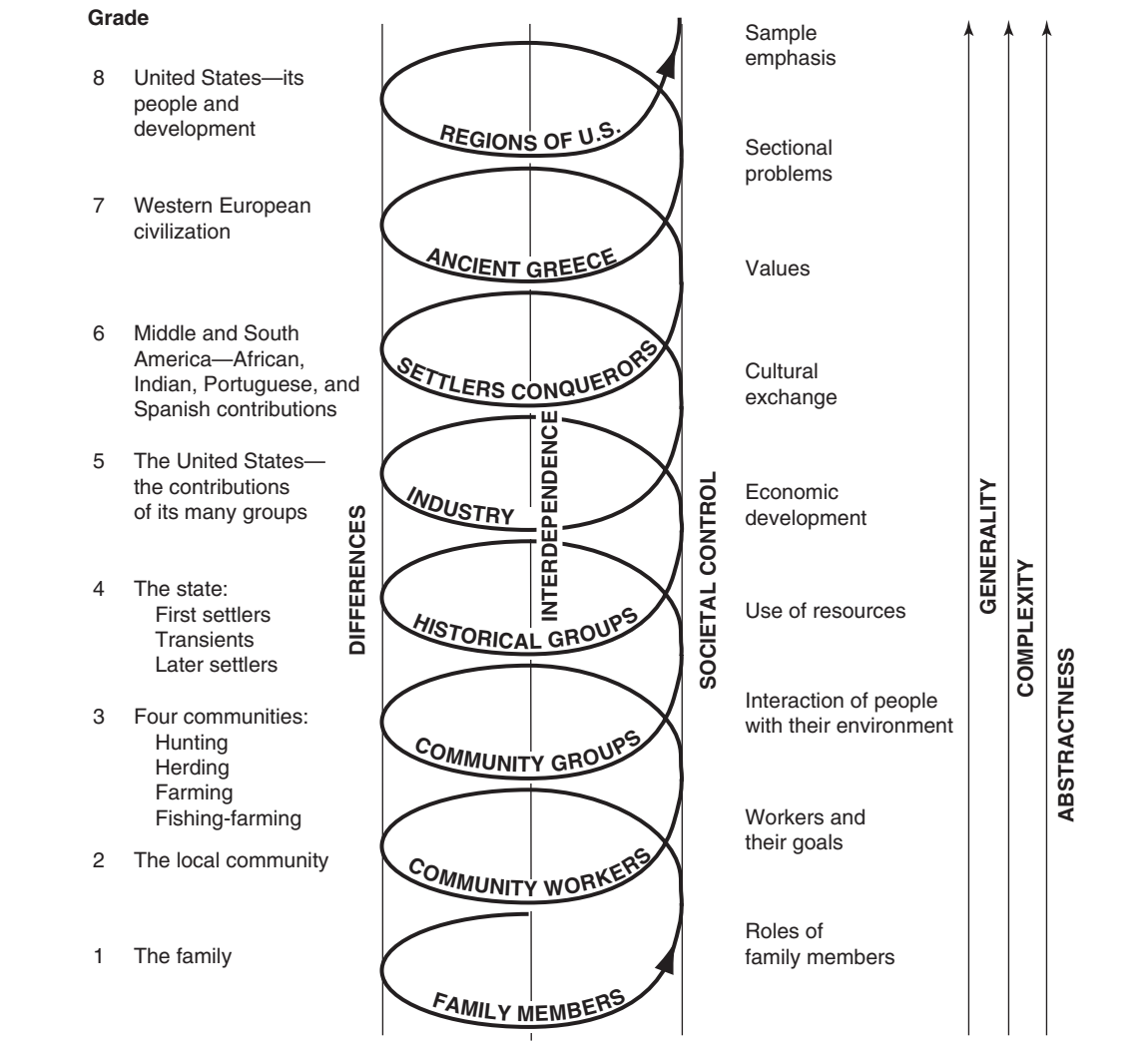
Source: Robert D. Barr, James L. Barth, and Samuel Shermis, *Defining the Social Studies*, Bulletin 51. Reprinted with permission of the National Council for the Social Studies.

problems. They come to school with a greater knowledge of the world and a far wider range of interests than the expanding horizons curriculum envisioned.

Critics believe that the expanding horizons curriculum does not present an accurate view of the interrelationships among the different communities (e.g., family, local community, state, nation, and world). It may also discourage using current and controversial events that take place outside of the community being studied. For critics, the focus on the here and now can be replaced with other learning experiences if children can connect with the topic through personal experience or interest.

The 1990s were awash with new curriculum ideas. The national standards in history, geography, civics, and economics all stressed more attention to their respective fields including the primary-grade area. Some advocated a greater focus on children's literature integrated into the social studies curriculum whereas others wanted more integration of subject areas within a theme. Alternative assessment ideas also attracted attention. However, these recommended changes were all within the existing expanding horizons model.

One older alternative pattern is the **spiral curriculum** advocated by Hilda Taba (see Figure 1.4). In this model, basic concepts and processes from the social sciences such as interdependence or cultural change are taught each year on a higher level of abstraction. For example, first-grade students might learn how families depend on one another for natural resources and manufactured goods. By the fourth grade, they might study the first pioneer families that settled in their state. Care must be taken in using this pattern to ensure that the topics are truly moving to higher levels and not just repeating topics such as "community workers" or "food." The spiral curriculum can be used to support the rationale for repeating U.S. history three times—each time it is taught at a more complex and more meaningful level. The NCSS ten learning themes are also an example of a spiral curriculum.

Figure 1.4 The Spiral of Concept Development


Source: Hilda Taba, Mary C. Durkin, Anthony H. McNaughton, and Jack R. Fraenkal. *A Teacher's Handbook to Elementary Social Studies*, 2nd ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1971). Copyright © 1971 by Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. Used by permission of Pearson Education, Inc.

Why Are Textbooks and Technology Important?

The adoption of social studies textbooks and programs has had a great influence on what is taught in elementary social studies. If you compare a new social studies textbook series with the one you had in elementary school, you will notice that today's textbooks are much more colorful and attractive.

Due to the growing number of diverse students, almost all textbook series now show content and pictures of a wide diversity of ethnic, gender, racial, and religious groups, in response to demands to eliminate racism and sexism in our society. Publishers now can tailor the number of photos of ethnic/racial groups to match the percentages of particular states. For example, Hispanics in a California social studies textbook account for 35 percent of the photos and illustrations, but Hispanics are only 6 percent in the same text in North Carolina. However, African Americans make up 22 percent of the people in the North Carolina text, compared to 7 percent shown in the California edition. In general, publishers are interested in getting their textbooks adopted in large states such as California and Texas along with large urban districts. This has increased the percentage of images devoted to minority groups. Publishers also have guidelines to reflect the disabled and the elderly in their textbooks. As an additional sales technique, publishers may also give away a lot of free material—tests, workbooks—with each purchase of a set of classroom books.

Typically the large publishers offer a series (often called a *basal series*) of textbooks and related supplementary materials from kindergarten through grade 6 or 7. Even if you follow a basal series closely, you will have some choices about what you teach. One choice occurs at the fourth-grade level, where state history and geography are generally taught. The major publishers issue specially prepared state textbooks for large states, and regional books are available for smaller states. Smaller publishing firms may also offer state history textbooks.

The next choice occurs at the sixth- and seventh-grade levels. Because there is no standard curriculum pattern at these levels, publishers often offer two or more textbooks that can be used for either grade, thus providing a wide and varying range of topics—the Eastern Hemisphere, the Western Hemisphere, or the world, for example.

Each publisher has a text for the pupils and a teacher's edition. A Spanish pupil text is also frequently available. The Big Book format is often used in kindergarten and primary grades instead of a pupil text. There also may be a separate Big Book format for geography or a special theme or subject area.

Recent trends found in elementary social studies textbooks include the following:

- Standards-based social studies content, organized around big ideas or concepts (in large adoption states, the state's standard may be written in each section of the student's textbook so that students are more aware of the purpose as they read.)
- Reading support built into the text with more strategies for struggling readers and English language learners as well as suggestions for the gifted/talented and special education students
- More technology components
- Students as "historical thinkers" using primary and secondary sources and multiple perspectives
- More visuals and maps

Publishers have looked carefully at the various standards to insure that their texts in general can meet as many state standards as possible. In addition, the testing required under the No Child Left Behind Act has put a prime focus on reading improvement. In fact, some critics are worried that the social studies texts are becoming more like reading texts and are not emphasizing enough social studies content. Reading skills are also reinforced by a wide

On Your Own 1.6**Compare the Series: Identify Differences**

At a curriculum library, examine three different social studies textbook series at one particular grade level. Note carefully what content is covered in the textbook. Also, look at the teacher's guide for suggestions on how to teach the program. How are the series similar? How are they different? ●



array of supplemental materials. Each grade level usually has literature books, adventure books, vocabulary books, a primary source anthology (usually for the teacher to read aloud), vocabulary cards, and various types of workbooks. Help for English language learners (ELLs) also is common. Nontechnology aides include transparencies, outline maps, atlases, posters, and foldables (graphic organizers). The emphasis on testing also is shown by supplemental materials on tests for chapter, unit, and performance assessment. In addition, practice for taking tests is available.

Technology abounds with almost all publishers having a CD or DVD for an oral presentation of the text. Software may also be used to increase writing skills, another area of emphasis along with reading. Songs, poems, and games on CD or DVD can enliven the text, as can software for making time lines, maps, and graphs. Videos and video clips on CD or DVD are also correlated with the text. The publisher can offer services using the Internet for current events as well as professional training in using their products.

Of course, all of the supplemental materials cost money on top of the initial purchase price of the pupils' textbooks. Publishers' representatives informally state that if a teacher or district buys the supplemental materials, then the teacher is more likely to have and to use the materials. This will result in more time spent in achieving a better social studies program. But in many classrooms, teachers feel fortunate if they have enough pupil textbooks and a teacher's guide for their own use.

Some critics argue that the basal social studies textbooks are very similar. This concern may stem from the similarity of titles; the word *family*, for example, shows up frequently at the first-grade level. But a careful examination of the textbooks will show considerable differences. Some textbook series are better for struggling readers. Others emphasize global education. Still others, although they bear recent copyright dates, really have changed very little from those of twenty years ago. Map skills are found in all textbooks, but some series also emphasize skills in reading, fact-finding, and thinking.

Textbooks may be better than ever but it is the teacher as a planner who uses the textbook to make it an effective resource and tool. The teacher's instructor guide can inspire teachers to do a better job of helping their students to learn. For that reason, it is a good idea to get copies of both textbooks and teacher's guides from several publishers. That way you have an abundance of ideas for student learning on a given topic.

Educators complain about overreliance on the textbook. Often it has been the only instructional tool used, and this limitation has resulted in narrow, restricted programs. Applied creatively, however, the textbook can be a very valuable resource. It is important for teachers and committees concerned with the selection of textbooks to look very carefully at the possible choices. There are many differences among the textbook series. The wide range of activities suggested in a teacher's guide may make a social studies textbook series unique. Teachers stuck with unsuitable textbooks for their classes work at a disadvantage in trying to provide a good social studies program.

Technology

The widespread use of computers and associated interactive multimedia tools is continuing to change what happens in many classrooms as well as in our homes and the outside world. Technology has unlimited possibilities for enriching and enlivening the social studies and our lives. Most classrooms now have a few computers. With the increased use of handhelds, some classes have moved to individual computing with each student having computer capacity. More frequently both teachers and students use e-mail and search the Net for information about historical or current events. For example, primary sources from data collections, art museums, and historic places can locate photos, documents, and music that can help students visualize the past.

Teachers increasingly use teacher portals and other websites to find repositories of lesson plans, assignments, links, and ideas. From these many sources, they then use word processing to make their lesson plans and activities for their students. More teachers send e-mail to parents and colleagues. In addition, there is greater use of class management systems for student information such as attendance records and grades/report cards. In the classroom, students use software to learn basic skills in reading and math and word processing for writing. Assessment of students is increasingly being done online, especially teachers monitoring during the year how well students are doing in reading and math. There may be a class blog.

However, students spend more time at home than school using the Internet for e-mails, sending messages to friends, or playing games. A few even write blogs. Even primary students are now more computer savvy as they watch their family members use computers and realize that often their parents/guardians use computers at work. Children have positive attitudes toward technology. They want to play with the computer too. However, while it appears that everyone is online, there is still a “digital divide” for lower-income children. About four-fifths of children have access to the Internet at home and those without access need special attention to help them develop computer literacy. Solutions include loaning materials such as computers, printers, and software to students and providing a safe and convenient place for students to access computers and the Internet at school.

Although teachers are using computers to make their everyday teaching lives easier, it appears that many in teaching social studies are using the computer mainly to locate lessons, information, photos, and videos. Much less frequently are teachers designing lessons in which their students use the computer other than to find information. It is a challenge for busy teachers to find the time to incorporate technology into their lesson plans. As an example, collaboration and communication with students other than classmates is less common. Seldom is there a blend of online and classroom teaching.



Small Group Work 1.3



Check Where You Stand

Do you think any changes should be made in what is taught (topics) and when it is taught (specific grade levels)? Should there be a greater emphasis on certain disciplines such as history? Do you think the expanding community pattern is the best way to organize the elementary social studies curriculum? ●

Summary

A good social studies program should help students become informed citizens capable of making wise decisions. Advocates of NCLB and state standards encourage teachers and schools to strive for higher achievement. However, the social studies program could be neglected by the current emphasis on reading, math, and science, unless teachers integrate and highlight the social studies. Your values and background influence the decisions you make in teaching the social studies. National curriculum patterns and textbooks influence greatly how social studies is taught.

Suggested Readings and Websites

Barr, Robert D., James L. Barth, and S. Samuel Shermis. *Defining the Social Studies*, Bulletin 51. Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1977.

Hundreds of stories to help children understand and develop character. An example of building character education approach. See also Bennett's two other books: *The Book of Virtues for Young People: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) and *The Children's Book of Heroes* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). Other advocates of the character education movement are the following: William Kilpatrick, *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect & Responsibility* (New York: Bantam, 1992); Edward Wynne and Kevin Ryan, *Reclaiming Our Schools: A Handbook on Teaching Character, Academics, and Discipline* (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

Cuban, Larry. "History of Teaching in Social Studies." In James P. Shaver, ed., *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning*, New York: Macmillan, 1991, pp. 197–209.

Summary of history of social studies teaching.

Evans, Ronald W. *The Social Studies Wars: What Should We Teach the Children?* New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.

History of attacks on social studies.

Evans, Ronald W., and David Warren Saxe, eds. *Handbook on Teaching Social Issues*, NCSS Bulletin 93. Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1996.

Rationale and activities for issues-centered social studies.

Haas, Mary E., and Margaret A. Laughlin, eds. *Meeting the Standards: Social Studies Readings for K–6 Educators*. Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1997.

Excellent source of journal articles designed to help teachers using the NCSS standards; other curriculum issues also discussed.

Jenness, David. *Making Sense of Social Studies*. New York: Macmillan, 1990.

A publication of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools.

Kaltsounis, Theodore. "Democracy's Challenge as the Foundation for Social Studies." *Theory and Research in Social Education* 22, no. 2 (Spring 1994): 176–193.

Democracy and democratic citizen education should be the logical foundation on which to structure the social studies program. Previous models of democratic education have failed.

Kirschenbaum, Howard. *100 Ways to Enhance Values and Morality in Schools and Youth Settings*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1995.

Traditional methods for inculcating and modeling as well as the values clarification approach.

Munroe, Susan, and Terry Smith (The Casados Group). *State Geography Standards: An Appraisal of Geography Standards in 38 States and the District of Columbia*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1998.

Authors funded by a conservative foundation find most state geography standards faulty.

National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools. *Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century*. New York: National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools, November 1989.

Rejection of expanding communities pattern by four organizations.

National Council for the Social Studies. "Fostering Civic Virtue: Character Education in the Social Studies." *Social*

Education 61, no. 4 (April/May 1997): 225–227.

Policy statement on character education.

Noddings, Nel. *The Challenge to Care in Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1992.

Alternative approaches to education organized around the theme of care.

Posner, George T. *Analyzing the Curriculum*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995.

Basic understanding of how curriculum has been organized and developed in America.

Saxe, David Warren. *State History Standards: An Appraisal of Standards in 37 States and the District of Columbia*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1998.

Author funded by a conservative foundation reviews state history standards and is very disappointed in their quality.

Social Education 49 (March 1985), article by S. Samuel Shermis and James L. Barth followed by response of James Shaver on indoctrination in the social studies.

Social Education 54 and 55 (November–December 1990 and January 1991), special issues devoted to pros and cons of *Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century*.

Stern, Sheldon M. *Effective State Standards for U.S. History: A 2003 Report Card*. Washington, DC: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003.

Funded by conservative foundations, the author reviews state standards for U.S. history. For more on the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, see www.fordhaminstitute.org.

Task Force of the National Council for the Social Studies. *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for*

Social Studies, Bulletin 89. Washington, DC: National Council for the Social Studies, 1994.

NCSS's curriculum standards.

Journals

The three journals of social studies that teachers should become familiar with are *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, and *The Social Studies*. In addition, publications such as *Learning and Instructor* may have social studies materials.

Websites

Education Week

www.edweek.org

Weekly stories and features about educational issues.

ERIC

www.eric.ed.gov

ERIC is the world's largest source of education information with more than one million abstracts of documents and journal articles on education research and practice.

National Council for the Social Studies

www.ncss.org

Site of the most important organization in the field of social studies, the National Council for the Social Studies. Material on its associated groups, conferences, workshops, standards, and resources.

Public Education Network

www.publiceducation.org

A wide variety of topics about public education.



RESEARCH ARTICLE READING EXERCISE

The Values Manifesto

Go to MyEducationLab, select the topic **NCSS Standards**, and read the research article entitled "The Values Manifesto" by G. Euvrard.

This article is an exciting case study of the NCSS standard "civic ideals and practices." Teachers and their students in Nambia worked to develop their own values manifesto. As a result of this activity, teachers found that class participation increased, and students expressed their opinions more freely. Teachers also reported that they began adhering to the classroom values more closely.

Complete the homework questions that accompany the article. You may print your work or have it transmitted to your professor as necessary.

